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Contact: John O'Brien  
(202) 225-2132

## **Istook Votes for Energy Independence**

### *House Expands Offshore Drilling*

Washington, DC -- Rep. Ernest Istook (R-OK) today voted to reduce America's dependence on foreign energy and to make gasoline and other forms of energy more affordable for consumers and businesses. The U.S. House today voted 232-to-187 to encourage offshore drilling by passage of H.R. 4761, the Deep Oceans Energy Resources Act (DOER) of 2006. By expanding drilling in the waters off of America's coasts, Congressman Istook voted to increase our energy resources for years to come.

**"We needed to open up these areas many years ago. Those who blocked it have hurt our country badly, and we all feel the results every time we fill up at the gas pump,"** said Istook. **"This legislation won't solve all our energy problems, but it's one part of the solution. We need to open up other areas; we need to build refineries here (especially in Oklahoma), and we need to stop over-regulating this and other industries. It will take years before other fuel options are feasible, but we've got to pursue them too. And of course we should also stop stifling safe use of nuclear energy."**

Currently, "85 percent of federally controlled offshore areas has been restricted, including the Pacific and Atlantic coasts, portions of the areas off the shores of Alaska, and the eastern Gulf of Mexico."<sup>1</sup> H.R. 4761 establishes state control over their own waters and allows for increased drilling for both natural gas and oil off of Americas Coast.

The DOER Act "would empower each coastal state government to decide whether or not to allow offshore oil and natural gas production. States that want to keep the federal restrictions in place would be free to do so, while those that wish to allow drilling could."<sup>2</sup>

Last year, Congressman Istook offered an amendment to the Interior Appropriations bill to expand off-shore drilling in the Gulf of Mexico, in an effort to decrease dependence on foreign oil and to make gasoline and other energy more affordable to consumers and businesses. This amendment was debated but not voted on due to procedural issues.

The DOER Act expands this concept to include all of America's coasts.

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<sup>1</sup> The Heritage Foundation "End Restrictions on Domestic Offshore Energy Production" by Ben Lieberman, WebMemo #1135 (<http://www.heritage.org/Research/EnergyandEnvironment/wm1135.cfm>).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.